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Neither Devil nor Angel, Sinner nor Saint: Moving Beyond a Dichotomized View of the Fallen Woman in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"

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'You, Sweet, ... Mistress, Wife, and Muse,
Were you for mortal woman meant?
Your praises give a hundred clues
To mythological intent!' ...
How proud she always was
To feel how proud he was of her!
"The Angel in the House" (1854)

Coventry Patmore's early poetic celebration of woman as a pure, angelic, domestic goddess remains a strongly resonant work with concurrent Victorian literature and a strongly prescient work of the Victorian literature to follow. Regardless of how socially and historically accurate Patmore's representation of such an inhumanly perfect Victorian woman is, the female "angel in the house" has come to define our

understanding of womanhood as it existed in the years between 1837 and 1901, when Queen Victoria reigned supreme in England. The "angel in the house" personifies the attitudes of moral righteousness, prudishness, and sexual repression that have become such popularly familiar perceptions of Victorian society's expression of sexuality.

Early in the century, Victorian gender theory espoused the idea that men were seen as lustful, sinful creatures who took advantage of innocent, fragile women. Later in the era, however, the tables turned and women were held accountable for appeasing their sexual appetites, while men simply could not be blamed for fulfilling their own innate, sexual needs (Lee, Victorian Web). Thus, a lady's classification as an "angel in the house" depended not only on her remaining in the domestic realm but, more importantly, on her intact chastity. Any woman who gave in to promiscuous or sexual acts outside the bond of marriage became a social pariah who had fallen from her pedestal, never to rise again—an act which establishes the relationship between angels in the house and

fallen women as a dichotomous one. These classifications represent polar opposites.

If angels in the house are certainly well represented in Victorian literature, fallen women—from Tennyson's Lady of Shalott to Hardy's Tess—are perhaps more. By applying the concept of the fallen woman to Lucy and Mina in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), one can see that each is neither devil nor angel, sinner nor saint. Understanding where Lucy and Mina lie on a pure-to-fallen woman continuum illuminates significant differences in their status which cannot be gleaned from defining the two women as exclusively virtuous or fallen. By incorporating an examination of Christina Rossetti's seminal poem "Goblin Market" (1862), which radically twists the tired tale of the fallen woman by rehabilitating her into society, we can provide a literary context for *Dracula* to help us move beyond oversimplified dichotomies.

Shortly after the publication of Patmore's "The Angel in the House," Christina Rossetti published *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, (1862). The work "was received like a

breath of fresh air over a rather stale poetic landscape, and almost overnight Rossetti became famous" (Blain 112). At the time of publication, Rossetti worked alongside her sister, Maria, at the St. Mary Magdalene Penitentiary for fallen women, endeavoring to "equip fallen women with the spiritual enlightenment, moral fortitude, and domestic skills necessary for them to escape their former depravity" (Escobar 134).

Heavily influenced by Rossetti's work at the House of Mercy, "Goblin Market" describes two sisters living in a country cottage. Each day at twilight all the maids in the country hear the cries of goblin merchants peddling their fresh, succulent fruit, but the women know better than to eat it, for "[they] must not look at goblin men, / [They] must not buy their fruits: Who knows upon what soil [the goblins] fed / Their hungry thirsty roots?" (Rosetti 116; lines 42 – 45). While her sister Lizzie "thrust a dimpled finger / In each ear, shut eyes and ran," "curious Laura chose to linger," and she "reared her glossy head" to look at the goblins as they tramped through the country (52, 69, 67 – 68).

When Laura decides to indulge her temptations by watching and listening to the goblins' "shrill repeated" cries of "come buy, come buy," she mirrors Lucy Westenra's forwardness in Chapter V of *Dracula* (89 – 90). Lucy, in a letter to her best friend Mina Harker, voices her fickle wish to accept the proposals of all three of her suitors. She asks, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (Stoker 60).

Each woman, either by her actions or words, reveals her desire for something she knows she either should not or cannot have. Laura has already said "we must not buy [the goblins'] fruits," just as Lucy voices her own knowledge of the sinfulness of what she has wondered—"But [to ask such a question] is heresy, and I must not say it" (line 43; Stoker 60). Unwittingly, both women have set themselves up to take the fall.

Because she did not run and hide like her sister, Laura encounters the goblins. She innocently purchases fruit from them with "a precious golden lock" of her hair, figuratively

sacrificing her maidenhead as she proceeds to feast on fruit that is "sweeter than honey from the rock" (126, 129).

> Victorian England's fallen women and St. Mary Magdalene's prodigal daughters experienced a need (whether physical want or desire) and sacrificed their maidenheads as well. The truth of the poem and Christina Rossetti's society was that women would pay dearly for such an exchange. (Escobar xx)

When it comes to literary depictions of women who "sacrificed their maidenheads," an important distinction is that the act in literature, as with Laura, Lucy, and Mina, is usually figurative. Rare cases were those such as Hardy's Tess of the D'Ubervilles, who experiences a literal loss of virginity when she is raped and subsequently becomes pregnant. Intercourse determines fallen woman status in a clear cut case like Tess's.

Yet most authors substituted softer, figurative representations of a woman's fall, such as Tennyson's Lady of Shalott who leads a cursed life after gazing out her window

to look upon Sir Lancelot. She loses her innocence—a socially constructed, subjectively understood concept—rather than literally losing her physical virginity through engaging in the act of sexual intercourse. "Goblin Market" and *Dracula* follow in this pattern but with increased sexual suggestiveness and symbolism. Rossetti and Stoker both exhibit a reticence to speak frankly in sexual terms, but they do infuse these two works with incredibly strong sexual undercurrents through their usage of figurative representations. Rossetti was a deeply religious woman, which explains a large part of her restraint.

As Christopher Bentley has written regarding the influences governing Stoker and Victorian writers in general, "the obscenity laws, the tyranny of the circulating libraries, and the force of public opinion were, throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, powerful constraints on any author who wrote for the general public..." (142). Thus, authors necessarily devised highly creative figurative substitutes for the event of a woman's loss of virginity. In "Goblin Market," Rossetti makes use of Garden of Eden symbolism. Laura's eating of the tempting, juicy, fresh-from-

the-vine goblin fruit stands in figuratively for the sexual act and her loss of innocence. In *Dracula*, Stoker accentuates the symbolically sexual nature of the act of fluid transfer: Lucy and Mina drink blood, a staple ritual of vampires established in the traditional mythology and folklore.

In "Goblin Market," the description of Laura eating the fruit for the first time is blatantly sexually suggestive: "She sucked and sucked and sucked the more / Fruits which that unknown orchard bore; / She sucked until her lips were sore ..." (134 – 136). When she returns home, "Lizzie met her at the gate / Full of wise upbraidings":

> [You] should not loiter in the glen
> in the haunts of goblin men.
> Do you not remember Jeanie,
> How she met them in the moonlight,
> Took their gifts both choice and many ...
> But ever in the noonlight
> She pined and pined away;
> Sought them by night and day,

Found them no more but dwindled and grew
grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low . . . (141 – 159)

Jeanie's story foreshadows Laura's own physical and emotional withdrawal even though Laura herself does not realize she has already fallen and is on the same path as Jeanie, who represents the ultimate stereotypical fallen woman.

Laura seems to understand her sacrifice on some level, though, because when she initially clipped her "precious golden lock" with which to buy the fruit, "she dropped a tear more rare than pearl" (127). Her single tear indicates her awareness of making the exchange Escobar mentioned. Unaware of just how dearly she will pay for the exchange, however, Laura hushes her sister's speech, telling Lizzie her "mouth waters still" and she will simply buy more fruit the next night to appease her growing hunger (166). Laura spends the next day in an "absent dream ... sick in part" and "longing

for the night" (211 – 212, 215). The evening comes slowly, and Laura finds at twilight she can no longer hear the goblins cry, "come buy, come buy" or "discern[] even one goblin / Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling" (232, 236 – 237). She "turned cold as stone / To find her sister heard that cry alone" (253 – 254). Laura's withdrawal symptoms begin almost immediately upon returning home:

> [She] crept to bed, and lay
> Silent till Lizzie slept;
> Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
> And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
> As if her heart would break … (264 – 268)

Her "hair grew thin and gray; / She dwindled" with "sunk eyes and faded mouth" (277 – 278, 288). Laura's withdrawal resembles that experienced by modern-day drug addicts who find themselves deprived of drugs to support their habit.

Laura's decline in physical and mental health parallels that of Lucy, who almost as soon as we meet her needs constant

blood transfusions to keep her alive. We can compare Laura's deterioration with Lucy's diminishing health as meticulously recorded by Mina in her journal:

> Lucy seems to be growing weaker ... I do not understand Lucy's fading away as she is doing ... all the time the roses in her cheeks are fading, and she gets weaker and more languid day by day; at night I hear her gasping as if for air. (Stoker 92).

Dr. Seward later records that "[Lucy] was ghastly, chalkily pale; the red seemed to have gone even from her lips and gums, and the bones of her face stood out prominently; even her breathing was painful to see or hear ..." (112 – 113). Just as Laura longs for the taste of goblin fruit and the nourishment it will provide her, Lucy craves the blood which has become necessary to replenish the supply Dracula drains from her each night. Lucy develops a dependence on blood, as it literally becomes necessary to sustain her life. Laura's fall, on the other hand, can be traced back to one event —her eating the goblin fruit. Once she has eaten, she

has fallen. Lucy's fall is, however, more difficult to pinpoint, occurring in stages rather than at a precise moment.

Lucy's descent from lady to fallen woman begins when she rhetorically asks why she cannot marry all three of her suitors. Stoker punishes Lucy for her forwardness by having Dracula visit her each night, tainting her purity by establishing an intimate, highly sexually charged relationship in which he drinks blood from her neck. These visits take place on the sly, outside recorded observations in Mina's, Dr. Seward's, and Jonathan's journals; we hear only that the two puncture wounds on Lucy's neck refuse to heal. In an ironic twist of fate, Lucy's wish to marry as many men as had proposed to her comes true in a symbolic sense: Dr. Seward, Quincy Morris, and her fiancé Arthur all give her their blood via transfusions.

> The act of transfusing blood, of penetrating Lucy's body with the phallic needle and enabling the men to deposit their own fluids in her, conjures up images of gang rape ... Each transfusion

> symbolizes a kind of ghastly marriage and prompts Van Helsing to fret that "this so sweet maid is a polyandrist." Stoker gives Lucy what she wants and teaches her a lesson at the same time. (Signorotti 623)

Thus, Stoker reduces Lucy's status as a lady even more after tainting her with Dracula's visits by making her a passive, unconsciously willing receptacle for the bodily fluids of many men, none of whom to which she is married. Unfortunately, after Stoker teaches Lucy a lesson through these suggestive transfusions, Lucy still dies, only to return as one of the Undead. She is no longer a woman but a vile "Thing" who "seemed like a nightmare of Lucy" (Stoker 192, 190). When she dies and returns as a vampire, Lucy in a sense becomes like a super, evil fallen woman. The stereotype of the broken, fallen woman is reincarnated in Lucy as proud, voluptuous, and strong, with a ravenous appetite for drinking blood, the ultimate symbol for sex in Stoker's vampire tale.

At this point in the novel, the dichotomized devil and angel imagery becomes especially important. When Lucy turns into an Undead, Van Helsing enlists the aid of Dr. Seward, Quincy Morris, and Arthur to kill her by "cut[ting] off her head ... fill[ing] her mouth with garlic ... and driv[ing] a stake through her heart" (179). In his inspirational speech to the men, Van Helsing states, "Instead of working wickedness by night and growing more debased in the assimilation of it by day, [Lucy] shall take her place with the other Angels," implying Lucy will return to her pure state in death and be an Angel once more for her eternal life (191). Implying that Lucy is not an angel when she is an Undead, we can deduce logically that we are therefore meant to see Lucy as the polar opposite of an angel—in this case, a devil. The impression gleaned from Van Helsing's speech supports this dichotomous way of seeing Lucy, especially after the act of killing her is complete, when Van Helsing confirms Lucy's devil status by saying, "... she is not a grinning devil now—not any more a foul Thing for all eternity" (193).

Escobar states that "because the Victorians rested their sense of decency, morality, and familial cohesion on the very human shoulders of an etherealized womanhood, if a woman fell, she fell utterly" (133). In this same tradition, Lucy falls, and she falls utterly. When we are first introduced to her in the novel, Lucy displays a delightful sense of innocence and purity in her letter to Mina, in which her girlish giddiness over being in love with Arthur ("I love him; I love him; I love him!") permeates the tone (Stoker 57). She seemingly travels down a continuum in her classification as a woman, careening from one extreme to the other. She plummets from the height of her lady's pedestal into the depths of fallen woman status. Stoker even drives Lucy past the point of a fallen woman by turning her into a vile, evil "Thing" (193).

While Lucy's story exemplifies Stoker's dichotomous labeling of Lucy—she is initially like a pure angel, only to fall and turn into an Undead devil, only to be revived in eternal life as an angel—Stoker moves away from dichotomous characterization somewhat with Mina, who ultimately does not fall as precipitously as Lucy. The continuum supports an infinite

number of classifications between the two dichotomous extremes, making the continuum an excellent way to redefine our concept of the fallen woman. As if he was simply required to provide a traditional, clearly defined case of the fallen woman with Lucy, Stoker experiments with this continuum in Mina's character, driving her back and forth along the pure-to-fallen woman continuum. Perhaps due to the radical groundwork of "Goblin Market," Mina is not forced to fall like Lucy. The conclusion of "Goblin Market" illuminates Stoker's trial with Mina, who identifies greatly with Laura's sister, Lizzie. When Laura, "dwindling / Seemed knocking at Death's door," Lizzie determinedly goes looking for the goblins:

> . . . Lizzie weighed no more
> Better and worse;
> But put a silver penny in her purse,
> Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps
> of furze
> At twilight, halted by the brook:
> And for the first time in her life
> Began to listen and look. (322 – 328)

When the goblins "spied her peeping," they descend en masse upon her, proceeding to hug, kiss, squeeze, and caress her (330 – 331, 348 – 350). Like Dracula, whose many guises include taking the form of a bat or wolf, the goblins approach Lizzie "cat-like and rat-like, / Ratel- and wombat-like, / Snail-paced in a hurry, / Parrot-voiced and whistler . . ." (340 – 343). Lizzie attempts to purchase fruit from the goblins by tossing them her penny, but they insist upon her taking a seat and eating with them, which she refuses to do, remembering Jeanie. When the goblins snub her, Lizzie demands her penny back, and the goblins get angry, "grunting and snarling" and ". . .call[ing] her proud, /Cross-gained, uncivil. . ." (393 – 395). But Lizzie stands her ground, "white and golden," thinking to herself that though "one may lead a horse to water, / Twenty cannot make him drink" (408, 422 – 425).

> Tho' the goblins cuffed and caught her,
>
> Coaxed and fought her,
>
> Bullied and besought her,
>
> Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
>
> Kicked and knocked her,

Mauled and mocked her,

Lizzie uttered not a word;

Would not open lip from lip

Lest they should cram a mouthful in:

But laughed in heart to feel the drip

Of juice that syrupped all her face,

And lodged in dimples of her chin,

And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.

(424 – 436)

Thus, what has ensued—the goblins pelting Lizzie with fruit and abusing her— is essentially a gang rape, comparable with the more subdued gang rape of Lucy to which Signorotti referred.

What follows when Lizzie returns home is blatantly sexual. Lizzie commands Laura to "hug [her], kiss [her], suck [her] juices," and Laura obeys, "kiss[ing] and kiss[ing] [Lizzie] with a hungry mouth" (468, 492). Just as fresh blood invigorates Lucy, Laura responds to licking the fruit juices off her sister in unabashedly orgasmic fashion: she "writh[ed] as one possessed" and "beat her breast;" she was "like a caged thing freed"(496). She felt "swift

fire spread thro' her veins"(499), and "she fell at last; / Pleasure past and anguish past ... " (496, 499, 505, 507, 521). In the aftermath of this two-person bacchanalian-esque orgy, Laura wonders, "Is it death or is it life?" and answers herself, "Life out of death" (523 – 524). Thus, Laura finds life out of death in the same way Lucy finds eternal life as an angel out of her death as a devil. Even though Lucy is restored to her "unequalled sweetness and purity" in death and Laura is restored to her innocence while still alive, both women plunge from the pinnacle of ideal Victorian woman status to full-fledged fallen woman status, only to return to their pure states once again.

Although Lucy could not be saved, Laura owes her salvation solely to her sister, Lizzie, to whom we can compare Mina on multiple levels. Lizzie is commonly seen as a Christ-like figure. When asking Laura to feast on her, Lizzie uses language similar to Jesus' words at the Last Supper (Rosetti lines 468 – 473).

Sacrificing her own innocence to save her sister's, Lizzie provides a good context for examining Mina, who repeatedly

makes a variety of personal sacrifices in attempts to save and redeem the lives of those around her—from her husband to Dracula himself.

> Mina uses her womanly power of pity to intercede with men even for the worst of criminals, insisting that even [Dracula] can be redeemed. Her idea of dying to one's worse self so that the better self may live is the traditional Christian idea of dying to the flesh that the spirit may live: vampirism is only an extreme version of the evil of the body against which Christians have been told to fight for almost two thousand years. And Mina is the ideal Christian woman, recalling men to an ideal of charity and love through her holy influence. (Weissman 74)

A veritable savior, Mina's numerous sacrifices vary greatly in their degree of personal submission.

In her very first appearance in the novel, when Mina writes a letter to Lucy, one of the first things she tells Lucy is

that she "has been working very hard lately, because [she] want[s] to keep up with Jonathan's studies, and [she] has been practicing shorthand very assiduously" (Stoker 55). Always careful to put her talents in the service of her husband, Mina is clearly not a New Woman, whom she obligatorily disparages:

> Some of the 'New Women' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the New Woman won't condescend in the future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it, too! There's some consolation in that. (87)

After Lucy's death, Mina places her talents wholeheartedly in the service of men—Van Helsing, Dr. Seward, Arthur, Quincy Morris, and Jonathan—to aid in Dracula's capture. She painstakingly copies everyone's journals so that each person has a copy of everyone else's for their records, and she acts as a human beacon of sorts, transmitting telepathic information while hypnotized.

Even though she proves her strength and shows her ability to work hard alongside the men, Mina is nevertheless delegated to female roles, such as being the secretary at the group's first formal meeting about destroying Dracula. Stoker goes to great lengths to establish Mina firmly on top of the proverbial pedestal. The other men sing her praises. Van Helsing says, "She has man's brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and a woman's heart" while Jonathan writes, "I never saw Mina so absolutely strong and well" (206, 218). But just so that we do not get the wrong idea about her unique womanly capabilities, the men qualify statements such as these, constantly putting her in her place. After Van Helsing praises her as a woman whom "the good God fashioned. . . for a purpose. . . After tonight she must not have to do with this so terrible affair. It is not good that she run a risk so great" (206). Immediately after he says he has never seen Mina look so strong, Harker writes, "I am so glad she consented to hold back and let us men do the work" (218). Dr. Seward echoes these sentiments, stating, "Mrs. Harker is better out of it. Things are quite bad enough to us, all men of the world, and who

have been in many tight places in our time; but it is no place for a woman ..." (225).

Though we now consider these statements chauvinistic, they serve to enforce Mina's status as a good, pure woman who knows her place and even revels in occupying that place. Her only objections to their treatment of her remain insignificant because they are so childishly petulant as when she states after a meeting with the men, "Manlike, they have told me to go to bed and sleep; as if a woman can sleep when those she loves are in danger! I shall lie down and pretend to sleep, lest Jonathan have added anxiety about me when he returns" (214). Even in her complaints Mina acquiesces to gender-based inferiority.

Unlike Lucy, who voiced her desire to marry three men, Mina never does anything to incur punishment or her loss of figurative innocence. Indeed, her decision to drink Dracula's blood is noble because she drinks specifically to keep Dracula from harming her husband but is tainted by her own unconcious desires. She remembers Dracula's threat, "Silence! If you make a sound I

shall take [the sleeping Jonathan] and dash his brains out before your very eyes" (251). Mina "[was] appalled and was too bewildered to do or say anything" (251). When he "placed his reeking lips upon [her] throat," Mina "strangely enough did not want to hinder him" (251). Because her sexual desire is unconcious, she absolves herself of any blame for her response by "suppos[ing] it is a part of the horrible curse . . . when his touch is on his victim" (251). When Mina drinks Dracula's blood, she retains much of her innocence because we know she drinks under duress:

> When the blood began to spurt out [of the vein in his breast], he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the—Oh my God! my God! what have I done? (252)

The truth is that Mina has done nothing to deserve such a fate, which is why Stoker ultimately redeems her.

Mina is worthy, while fickle Lucy was a threat to the Victorian expectations. As Lucy grows weaker and approaches death, she is entirely useless to everyone around her. Although unconscious, she literally drains life out of Dr. Seward, Quincy Morris, and Arthur when she takes their blood. On the other hand, as Mina grows increasingly weak, she still makes significant contributions to the efforts of those around her in order to stop Dracula. She willingly undergoes hypnosis in order to track Dracula telepathically. She travels with the men to Dracula's country in order to help defeat him. She forces the men to promise to kill her—her ultimate sacrifice—should she turn into a vampire. Thus, while Lucy was worthy of redemption only in death, Mina's sacrifices outweigh the corruption of Dracula's bite and blood, earning her redemption in life.

Carrol Fry makes a compelling argument about *Dracula*, noting that Stoker's use of "disguised conventional characters"(35) essentially defines the novel and its latent sexuality.

> The most apparent of these characters is the "pure woman," the staple heroine of popular fiction from

> Richardson to Hardy. In dozens of novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this pure woman is pursued by a "rake," a seducer who has designs on her virtue. The melodrama is based on the reader's suspense regarding whether or not he will succeed. Those women who lose their virtue become "fallen women," outcasts doomed to death or secluded repentance. In *Dracula*, there are two "pure women," Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, the former of whom actually does "fall." The role of the "rake" is played by Count Dracula, and vampirism becomes surrogate sexual intercourse. The women who receive the vampire's bite become "fallen women." (35)

Note that Fry classifies only Lucy as a fallen woman but defines fallen women as those bitten by Dracula .Because Dracula bites Mina as well as Lucy, by Fry's definition, Mina should also be a fallen woman. Fry fails to distinguish between the status of Lucy and Mina, equivalently classifying both of them as fallen

women when they occupy different parts of the pure-to-fallen woman continuum. Lucy falls utterly; Mina falls only partially and is redeemed. We have to assume that, had Mina died and transformed into an Undead, she too would have fallen completely and suffered Lucy's fate. Christopher Bentley notes:

> Though the vampire's attack symbolizes sexual intercourse, or more precisely, in the view of the presumed chastity of the two female victims, loss of virginity, there is one important difference. Unlike actual defloration, the process is reversible, for the victim can be redeemed by the death of her seducer, the vampire; the burn mark on Mina's forehead, caused by the touch of the Host when she was "unclean," disappears as soon as Dracula is destroyed. The physical and spiritual degradation incurred by the victim of a vampire need not be permanent . . . (31)

As Fry asserts, in *Dracula,* death, not the bite itself, is a better indicator of which women fall. Dracula bites both Lucy and

Mina: the death of Lucy *when she is a vampire* restores her to posthumous purity ; the death of Dracula restores Mina to purity in life.

In their conclusions, "Goblin Market" and *Dracula* are extremely similar. Mina, Laura, and Lizzie all have children and have been able to move on with their lives because of their redemptions. The past efforts made to redeem these women are construed as valiant and well worth the sacrifices made to obtain their renewed status as pure women. Not only are they rehabilitated but they also survive their respective trials to return to their normal lives with a heightened sense of moral awareness. Carol Senf points out, "Stoker's heroines emphasize that it is important to know the existence of evil so that they can consciously choose virtue" (48). Mina, like Laura and Lizzie, has experienced evil and emerged not only unscathed but much improved. Laura proceeds to tell her own and Lizzie's children "how her sister stood / In deadly peril to do her good, / And win the fiery antidote." Van Helsing also looks to future generations when he swears that Mina and Jonathan's son "will some day know what a brave and

gallant woman his mother is" (Rosetti 130 – 131, lines 557 – 559; Stoker 327).

All three women traveled along the pure-to-fallen woman continuum; some, like Lucy, made numerous stops along the way and others, like Lucy, fell instantly. What is important for us to take from their stories is how different they are from one another. In the same way that critics argue whether Dracula is evil or not, we cannot simply define Lucy as a devil, Mina as an angel, Laura as a sinner, Lizzie as a saint. Such opposing definitions restrict our analysis of these characters, resulting in a diminished understanding of how the concept of the fallen woman fits into Victorian literature.

"Goblin Market," published thirty-five years before *Dracula*, departed thoroughly from the established Victorian literature:

> The permission that "Goblin Market" grants fallen women to return from depravity to chastity, if not outright purity, was indeed radical. Christina Rossetti rejects her society's definition of female

> virtue and denounces its justifications for deserting fallen women . . . Neither idealizing nor denigrating her sex, Christina Rossetti depicts a woman who learns to put her virtue in action and a woman who regains the virtue she has lost. Each woman is capable, compelling, insightful, and of good character not because she claims some vague connection to angelic, perfect, or otherwise incorruptible womanhood but because she has persisted in her own imperfections to do right and see it prevail. (Escobar 133, 148)

By contrast, Stoker redeems Mina, who is is incredibly idealized, claiming many connections to angelic womanhood. Gail Griffin writes, "Mina presents herself as an excellent example of 'advanced' Victorian womanhood: accomplished, but only so that she can be a 'useful wife;' disparaging of the New Woman and her tampering with sex roles; obsessed with her 'duty' as a wife" (145). Stoker also

denigrates his women, especially by having those such as Mina embrace the chauvinistic attitudes which men display toward her.

Despite these differences, *Dracula* follows in the footsteps of "Goblin Market. We must be cautious, however, about implying that any similarities in *Dracula* occurred directly because of "Goblin Market." Parallels between the two tales are striking, *Dracula* obviously was influenced heavily by earlier vampire folklore and literature, such as Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. Very likely "Goblin Market" was also influenced by such earlier fiction. Rossetti's grandfather was John Polidori, author of "The Vampyre" and fourth member of the writing group (along with the Shelleys and Byron) that produced *Frankenstein*. Stoker may or may not have been aware of Rossetti's familial connection to Polidori, but Rossetti's poem was extremely popular so we assume Stoker would have read "Goblin Market" at some point. To what degree he was influenced by the poem remains unknown. Yet perhaps because of the important groundwork laid by Rossetti in her decision to rehabilitate a fallen woman in one of her poems, authors such as Stoker dared to redeem some of their women as

well, going out on a limb to save their heroines from the fates of those such as the Lady of Shalott and Tess.

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The Underground Man and Meursault: Alienating Consequences of Self-Authentication

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Although Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote a century earlier than the modern existentialist movement and Albert Camus rejected the label of existentialist (Davison 43), many scholars have strongly associated both authors with this philosophy. Even so, the complexity of existentialism makes it difficult to articulate a concrete definition or to categorically place authors within or outside of the movement. Patrick Lyall Bourgeois believes that "it is preferable to follow Paul Ricoeur's insistence in speaking, not of existential*ism*, but of existential*isms* in the plural, indicating a lack of unity of doctrine among various figures usually considered to be existentialists" (29-30). Despite the extensive differences

present in those texts traditionally considered existentialist in nature, Maurice Friedman speaks for many scholars in recognizing their important, albeit general, similarities. Significantly, he includes among their common elements the theme of self-authentication—that "distinction between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' existence" (4)—which many scholars consider the heart of existential thought. Since Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* and Camus's *The Stranger* are two texts profoundly concerned with authentic existence, it is appropriate to consider the authors as significant contributors to existentialist thought.

In numerous ways the Underground Man and Meursault, the texts' respective main characters, are infinitely complex and often drastically different in their thoughts and actions. Their common concern with the authentic self reveals striking similarities between the two personae. Both characters perceive a disparity between society's definitions of them and their own senses of self. This leads both the Underground Man and Meursault to commit radical acts in hopes of achieving personal wholeness. Unfortunately, instead of creating personal wholeness, these actions

serve to create complex divisions including alienation from other characters, from the reader, and even from the self.

Although both the Underground Man and Meursault have similar goals of authenticating their existence, each defines this objective differently. For the Underground Man, genuine self means one who has rebelled against the deterministic laws of nature to achieve free will. Gary Morson states that "for the underground man, real temporal process—as opposed to an already made product that merely takes time to be revealed—is essential to humanness" (197). The Underground Man refuses the notion that his actions are a result, not of his own desire, but rather of deterministic laws of nature that would reduce him to "nothing more than a kind of piano key or an organ stop" (Dostoevsky 18).

He believes that he can create meaningful existence by acting contrary to the supposed "law" that humans will always desire that which is advantageous to them. Detesting the confines of this determinism, he argues that a man may knowingly desire that which is painful or irrational merely to assert his freedom to

do so. Thus, man may make a choice "in order *to have the right* to desire something even very stupid and not be bound by an obligation to desire only what's smart" (Dostoevsky 21). The subsequent pages of *Notes from Underground* trace his verbal and physical refusal of rational determinism in an attempt to achieve authentic self.

Although conflicted emotions and behavior reveal "that in his heart of hearts the Underground Man does not know whether he is a free agent or not" (Jones 59), he chooses to embrace painful and irrational behavior in a desperate attempt to embody his definition of free will. One of the most striking examples occurs when a group of schoolmates plan a farewell dinner for a friend named Zverkov. The Underground Man asserts his free will by forcing his way into the affair. The Underground Man explains: "I'd go on purpose. The more tactless, the more indecent it was for me to go, the more certain I'd be to do it" (46). At the party he deeply offends his friends and suffers mental anguish in being excluded from the group. He knows he will not be able to forget

the incident, but he refuses to leave. The Underground Man reveals his tormented state when he says,

> (T)hese [are the] filthiest, most absurd, and horrendous moments of my entire life. It was impossible to humiliate myself more shamelessly or more *willingly.* (55, emphasis added)

Though the Underground Man seems partly motivated by spite towards his friends, this passage also reveals a clear desire for irrational, humiliating behavior: an obvious assertion of his free will.

Meursault also asserts a clear desire for authentic existence, but he does not argue for this identity as overtly as does the Underground Man. Therefore, his quest may be interpreted as a less intense struggle than that of the Underground Man, who attempts to prove authenticity while questioning his success in this endeavor. Both characters define authenticity differently. The Underground Man embodies the authentic self not by railing against determinism but rather against the social expectations for his behavior. He does not have

the emotional responses society expects or desires from him. In almost every situation, he responds in a way that others would define as inappropriate. He does not cry at his mother's funeral (Camus 91); he shows no grief after the ceremony, pursuing pleasurable and sensual activities the very next day (19-20); he is not disturbed when he hears his neighbor beating his mistress (36); he shows no remorse after killing an Arab (100).

Meursault's trial evolves into an examination of his moral sensibilities, revealing their inappropriateness according to social standards. When Meursault's lawyer hears the investigators' accusations that his client has "shown insensitivity" the day of his mother's funeral (Camus 64), he tries to make the case that Meursault was unable to express his emotions. Meursault, however, refuses to admit to emotions he never felt: "He [my lawyer] asked me if he could say that that day I had held back my natural feelings. I said, 'No, because it's not true'" (Camus 65). Refusing to defend those feelings which society demands of him, Meursault affirms his authentic self. He will not betray his true self to impress those observing him and requiring that he fit their social

mold. "Meursault refuses to make an abstraction of himself" by "becom[ing] a great performer of feelings" (Elbrecht 65).

Both the Underground Man's and Meursault's quests for self-authentication by rejecting society's confines ultimately alienate them from others. Maurice Friedman alludes to Kierkegaard's distinction between "the single one" and "the crowd" (10) in identifying typical characteristics of existentialist characters as including "personal authentication of existence, and with it, when necessary that aloneness that enables one to stand as a genuine person, or 'Single One,' in the face of the crowd" (10). Both Meursault and the Underground Man experience this aloneness—this distance from society—as a consequence of pursuing self-authentication.

The titles of the two works alert the reader to the prominence of this type of alienation in the characters' experiences. Camus entitled his novel *L'Etranger*, a very difficult term to translate accurately into English. Showalter refers to the definition of "étranger" in the established French dictionary, the *Petit Robert*: "Person whose nationality is not that

of a given country; person who does not belong, or is considered not to belong to a family or clan; person with whom one has nothing in common" (22)—noting that the last two meanings are particularly applicable to Camus's character. True to its title, *The Stranger* traces Meursault's experience as one who does not belong in society and is therefore alienated and rejected.

Scholars disagree somewhat as to why Meursault is fundamentally a stranger to the rest of society; however, they all note his non-conformity to societal standards. In his extended essay, "An Explication of *The Stranger*," Jean-Paul Sartre says that Meursault is "one of those terrible innocents who shock society by not accepting the rules of its game" (qtd. in Showalter 11). Albert Maquet's argument also sees society as a game governed by rules that we all must follow. He interprets Meursault's alienation as stemming from his refusal to support society's constructs.

> Society condemns . . . this kind of monster who refuses with unequaled firmness to enter into the game of their illusions, lies, and hypocrisies. Society wants a reassuring attitude from him and he

> does nothing but denounce, by his tranquil stubbornness in speaking the truth, the real and miserable aspect of man's fate. (55)

Meursault also appears a stranger to his society because he lives only in the immediate moment; past and future have no meaing for him. Living in successive, unrelated moments rather than in fluid time, he is completely indifferent to life because the past and the present do not affect his value judgments (Maquet 54). For this reason, he can flatly say after the weekend of his mother's funeral, "It occurred to me that anyway one more Sunday was over, that Maman was buried now, that I was going back to work, and that, really, nothing had changed" (Camus 24). This confinement to the present makes the concept of a future with someone meaningless. He tells his girlfriend Marie that love "didn't mean anything" (35) and that "it didn't really matter" whether or not they got married (42). In his book *Albert Camus: A Study*, Brian Masters notes that life for Meursault " is a succession of unrelated events. . .losing all value when they are over" (23). He continues to develop this idea as follows:

> This confinement to the present tense makes him "a 'stranger' among his fellows, with their pasts and their futures, their regrets and their aspirations. Being so unlike them, so 'bizarre' as Marie puts it, he is exiled and alone." (Masters 23)

The title *Notes from Underground* also suggests a theme of alienation between the individual and society. Only a "stranger" to the aboveground world would feel a need to withdraw to the solitary "underground." LikeMeursault, the Underground Man does not fit into society. He clearly recognizes his inability to integrate:

> At that time I was only twenty-four. Even then my life was gloomy, disordered, and solitary to the point of savagery. I didn't associate with anyone; I even avoided talking, and I retreated further and further into my corner.
>
> (Dostoevsky 30)

He later explains his realization that "no one was like me, and I wasn't like anyone else. 'I'm alone,' I mused, 'and they are

everyone'; and I sank into deep thought" (31). He has fleeting moments when he desires connection with others, as when he desires reconciliation with the friends he has offended (55); however, his insistence on irrational behavior effectively bars him from all hope of a healthy relationship.

His alienation is most evident in his rejection of love with Liza. When he first meets her, he appears to have a normal emotional response; he admires her physical appearance and her "simple and kind" face (60). However, his thoughts quickly become disturbing. Recognizing his disheveled appearance and "pale, spiteful, and mean" face, he thinks to himself, "'It doesn't matter. I'm glad' [...] 'In fact, I'm even delighted that I'll seem so repulsive to her; that pleases me...'" (60-1). He may have flickering moments when he desires normal relationships, but ultimately he "wanted to remain alone in my underground" (88).

He has deliberately chosen to defy the laws of nature that guide everyone else's actions, thus isolating himself from the aboveground world. In attempting self-authentication through irrational, disturbing behavior, he has distanced himself from others.

Like Meursault, the Underground Man works toward self-authentication by affirming his free will to choose irrationality; and his radical rejection of a determined life alienates him from the rest of the world, which operates under the supposed laws of nature. The significant element for both characters is their experience as Kierkegaard's "single one," alienated from "the crowd" in their process of creating a meaningful personal existence.

Although Meursault and the Underground Man appear to desire a connection with the reader, both characters ultimately distance themselves from their respective audiences. The most obvious basis for reader / character alienation in *The Stranger* is an inability to relate to Meursault. The reader, like the textual "others," cannot understand a character removed from emotion and confined exclusively to the present. As Albert Maquet argues, "Insensibility, indifference, absence of feelings, 'inhumanity,' this comprises more than is needed to elicit our avowal that Meursault has appeared to us [readers] as a 'stranger'" (54). The Underground Man may also be interpreted as a "stranger" because the reader has difficulty in relating to his aggressiveness,

intense turmoil, and anti-social behavior. As Malcom Jones states, "The Underground Man is certainly very unattractive, and no sane reader would choose the Underground as he does..." (61).

Initially, the first-person narrative appears to be most fitting for honesty and openness with the reader, since it allows the character to assume the role of narrator and directly share his point of view. However, this possibility is negated by the unreliability of the narrators. John Cruickshank expounds upon this significant characteristic of the text:

> Traditionally, the first-person narrator in fiction has possessed *a high degree of self-knowledge* and has enjoyed a *privileged insight* (emphasis added) into the thoughts and motives of his fellow characters... Immediately [when] one begins to read *L'Etranger*, however, one is struck by the fact that the narrator, who is also the main character, appears peculiarly ill-equipped, by traditional standards, for his task. His intellectual powers are unimpressive, his psychological insight

> is almost non-existent, and in general he appears bemused by experience. (152)

The narrator leaves the reader ignorant not only of insights about others but also about himself, because he lacks the "self-knowledge" of typical first-person narrators. Showalter notes the particular difficulty of interpreting Meursault in relation to the legal process because of his inadequacy as narrator: "Meursault provides a highly unreliable account of his trial—admits his attention wavers, that his memory is selective, that his own concerns differ from those of the court" (48). Not only does this warp the reader's perception of what actually occurred but notably, "The distortions [of his narration] do not reveal a pattern with which we can explain Meursault" (Showalter 48). Despite an apparent effort to make himself known, Meursault does not reliably communicate, rendering us incapable of understanding his authentic self.

This distancing reflects an authorial decision in character and text development. Patrick McCarthy compares Camus's literary objectives in both *The Stranger* and *Caligula* as follows: "In both cases his aim was to disturb the reader-spectator and to

prevent him from identifying with a hero or entering a story" (80). Camus has successfully accomplished this aim, alienating us from the main character. The reader cannot relate to a character removed from emotion and he cannot objectively enter the text because of the unreliable narration.

The Underground Man's similarly unreliable narration also disturbs the reader and prevents him from identifying with the Underground Man or understanding his authentic self. He alerts us to his inadequacy as a communicator and his inability to understand reality from the opening of the novel: "I am a sick man... I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I think my liver is diseased. Then again, I don't know a thing about my illness; I'm not even sure what hurts" (Dostoevsky 3). His ambivalence about his own concrete experience makes the reader uncertain of the reliability of his perceptions of himself and others.

As the story advances, the Underground Man serves not only as an unreliable narrator but also as an openly hostile one. Mikhail Bakhtin reads *Notes from Underground* as a text profoundly influenced by the language of other people and

interprets the main character's hostility as a fear-induced response to that language. The main character's primary objective is to attain freedom from the opinions and judgments of others (who may be interpreted as the readers), so he does not want to acknowledge their importance to his objective. Bakhtin explains this objective as follows:

> What he fears most of all is that people might think he is repenting before someone, that he is asking someone's forgiveness, that he is reconciling himself to someone else's judgment or evaluation, that his self-affirmation is somehow in need of affirmation and recognition by another. (154)

This desire and disdain creates a complex relationship between the Underground Man and his reader. Bakhtin recognizes that "in its attitude toward the other person it [the Underground Man's discourse] strives to be deliberately inelegant, to 'spite' him and his tastes in all respects" (156). His desire to be absolutely independent of the other's consciousness and its discourse means

an "extreme hostility toward it and nonacceptance of its judgments" (Bakhtin 155). Andrew Swensen also notes the antagonistic relationship set up between the Underground Man and his reader. "Dostoevsky's protagonist regularly addresses a 'you' within the text, a series of taunts marks this 'you' as an adversary" (270). Despite their use of first-person narrative, which could lend itself to open and enlightening disclosure to the reader. Both writers put the reader at a distance through their unreliable narrators.

Although these attempts at self-authentication distance the characters from others and the reader, their most tragic consequence is an ultimate alienation from their authentic selves. The Underground Man believes his hyperconsciousness allows him to reject determinism and define his own existence, yet this very mental state also serves as his downfall. In distancing himself from all objectifications including his own, he becomes both himself and the other, a division incompatible with a truly authentic self. Joseph Beatty asserts:

> Self-consciousness, then, is his [the Underground Man's] glory and misery. It is his glory because

> its transcendence of all determinations frees him from diminishment and reduction. Because he is always other, he is evermore ahead of any and all of his own or others' objectifications. Self-consciousness is also his misery, for he can neither be nor be recognized for what he is... *The tragedy of the UM [Underground Man] seems to be that he cannot know or be himself* (emphasis added) nor be known or be loved by others. (198)

A similar argument for self-division rather than reconciliation may be made for the main character of *The Stranger* although Meursault's self-alienation may be interpreted as resulting from an underdeveloped consciousness as distinguished from the Underground Man's hyperconsciousness. When asked during his trial whether he felt any sadness at his mother's funeral, Meursault articulates his self-approach: "I answered that I had pretty much lost the habit of analyzing myself and that it was hard for me to tell him what he wanted to know" (Camus 65). If one concedes that

Meursault has emotions (regardless of whether they conform to society's standards), then his unwillingness to examine his feelings actually renders him incapable of recognizing his true self. English Showalter, Jr. analyzes Meursault's reluctance for self-examination in relation to the killing of the Arab as follows:

> His [Meursault's] refusal of introspection allows him to confuse his conditioned reflexes with instincts. His rejection of purposes and meanings makes him blind to his own motives. He genuinely does not know why he killed the Arab, . . . [nor] why he did anything else. . . . Every attempt to make him examine his own motives he brushes aside [. . .] if he cannot withdraw physically, he withdraws mentally. (44)

Interpreted in this manner, Meursault's effort at self-authentication lacks introspection. He does not know his deepest self because he is blinded by his personal philosophy.

Thus, Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* and Camus's *The Stranger* trace their main characters'

existential pursuit of self-authentication by their refusal of traditional social confines. Both texts insightfully explore the relational consequences of this process; the Underground Man and Meursault want to embrace their authentic selves, yet pursuing this objective leads to absolute alienation as they are distanced from society, the reader, and themselves. By effectively criticizing self-authentication, Dostoevsky and Camus have made significant contributions to the existential discourse that has deepened people's understanding of the pursuit of one's true self.

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Sins of the Father:
Patriarchy and the Old South
in the Early Works of William Faulkner

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The events surrounding the Civil War and Reconstruction led to the decline of patriarchy in the Old South. With the end of the war and abolition of slavery, the social and economic foundations of the patriarchal structure began to collapse. The end of slavery eliminated the slaveholding father's power base and effectively invalidated his rule. With this collapse, the role of the father within the family and society as a whole greatly deteriorated. The father's continuing power loss created a situation where Southern fathers "could not help but feel dwarfed by the formidable ghosts of their forefathers" (Bleikasten 121-22). In most of

his early work, Faulkner is concerned with the father's fall and its effect on future generations.

In the years following the Civil War, the Old South came to exist on a nostalgic, mythical level. The horrors of slavery were replaced by a longing for a time untouched by war and industrialization This Southern romanticism was a reaction against an increasing push in the postbellum South toward industrialization, a movement that subordinated Southern romanticism in favor of an industrial North. C. Vann Woodward notes that while the South began to embrace the industrial vision, "there developed a cult of archaism, a nostalgic vision of the past" (*New South* 154) that was embraced by thousands of Southerners grieving for the Old Order. These fundamentalists resisted the new push towards an industrialized South and worked to establish the legitimacy of the Lost Cause. Woodward reveals the emotional state of the South during this time explaining that the more deeply Southerners committed to the new order, "the louder [were] the protests of loyalty to the Old" (155).

The old order to which Southerners related was patriarchal in organization. Andre Bleikasten points out that "in the Old South the patriarchal family typified to a large extent the proper relations between ruler and ruled and so supplied the primal model for social organization and political government" (156). Thus, the father's rule over his wife and children was accepted as law and gave justification to a secondary oppression, also specifically patriarchal in its structure—that of the slave by the slaveholder. The slaveholder was father and master in one and "presided over an extended family" (Bleikasten 156) of whites and blacks, demanding the same obedience from both his children and his slaves. The notion of the extended family, ultimately, came to characterize the whole system of race and class relations in the Old South. Although the plantation slaveholders did not make up the entirety of the Southern population, "the patriarchal and paternalistic values of the ruling class permeated Southern society at large" (156).

Faulkner's concern with the collapse of patriarchy in the rising New South is reflected in the wide array of ineffective fathers

that plague his earlier novels. Gwendolyn Chabrier states that "Faulkner's children as presented in his work of this [early] period are often doomed to be the prisoners of the narrow lives their parents allowed them. They are portrayed as puppets, their parents the puppeteers"(116). These fictional fathers include the incapable Mr. Jason Compson (*The Sound and the Fury*), destined to "fail at everything he touched" (Faulkner 206); Colonel Thomas Sutpen (*Absalom, Absalom!*), whose success would ultimately cost him not only his family but his life as well; Simon McEachern (*Light in August*), whose tyranny would eventually drive away his adopted son ; and finally, Anse Bundren (*As I Lay Dying*) whose children inexplicably stand by him despite his neglect.

Faulkner believed that the Old South was inextricably linked with patriarchy and that the father's authority within the family served as a model for many aspects of the Old South. Consequently, Faulkner represents the failure of the Old South through the failure of its patriarchs. The failure of these fathers reflects an outdated culture that was striving to

survive in an increasingly modern world. In particular, their inability to function as fathers stems from their own place within a hypocritical and destructive caste system. However, the majority of the blame falls upon each father, whose dependence upon Old Southern values leaves his children ill prepared for modernity. This results in the failure and death of the Faulknerian family, reflecting the fate of the Old South itself.

Fathers in Faulkner's early work are characteristically lost in the outdated values of the Old South. These values range from the religious Puritanism of McEachern to the nihilism of Mr. Compson. These men are similar in their inability to transcend their personal crises and inherited values to pass on any useful knowledge to their children. All they can offer is physical and emotional abuse combined with a destructive lack of practical knowledge. Mr. Compson's antiquated values are to blame for his inability to prepare his children for the New South rising around them. Rather than realizing his failure and attempting to offer his children a

chance at life in the modern world, he manages to instill in his children the same values that have created his impotence, particularly his nihilistic philosophy. Gwendolyn Chabrier states:

> the transmission of an outmoded code of ethics is a problem particularly plaguing to the twentieth-century South's upper classes, who have to adapt themselves to a value system based mainly on money rather than on . . . the virtues . . . at the heart of . . . the of the pre-Civil War South. (107)

This same problem exists for the Compson children whose father has raised them on ideals that are incompatible to the world they live in. Combined with Mr. Compson's nihilistic philosophy, these obsolete values leave the Compson children unable to function in the modern world. More than any other Compson child, the effects of Mr. Compson's teachings are shown most explicitly in Quentin, whose obsession with his father's philosophy eventually leads to his suicide.

Three years later, Faulkner would publish *Light in August*, telling the story of Joanna Burden, Gail Hightower, and Joe Christmas, all of whom are subjected to the outdated, puritanical values of their fathers. A common experience among children of the South, puritanical upbringing did much to alienate these children from their fathers. Chabrier explains that "(g)enerally, the child, or sometimes a grandchild, who is the recipient of a puritanical upbringing is weaned on principles and empty abstractions, not on love" (103). This accounts for Hightower's alienation from his father. In fact, Hightower's name suggests that he is unable to come down from his tower and engage with the real world.

This passing of obsession from father to child also explains the vehemence with which Joanna Burden fights for the civil rights of former slaves. Just as Hightower's romance with the past is taken too far, Joanna's fixation on race is taken to such an extreme that it leads to her death when she tries to impose her values on Joe Christmas. More than any

other character in the novel, Joe Christmas suffers because of his puritanical upbringing, the legacy of his adoptive father.

McEachern's contempt for his adopted son Joe Christmas is shown through their first meeting at the orphanage. The father stares at the boy with "the same stare with which he might have examined a horse or a second hand plow, convinced beforehand that he would see flaws" (142). McEachern would soon begin his attempt to control his adopted son whom he is convinced can be saved only by ritual beatings meant to instill the values of "work and the fear of God" (144). The battle of wills between father and son slowly breaks the boy of any ability to function properly in society. By the time Christmas is eight years old, McEachern has already worn the boy down through intense physical and mental abuse.

The violence and ruthlessness of his father is all Christmas has ever encountered. At seventeen,his submission is complete as Faulkner presents the image of "both the man and the boy accepting [his punishment] as a natural and

inescapable fact" (167). McEachern experiences every chance to correct the boy with a sense "of satisfaction and victory" (164). By the time his education is done, Christmas has become a cold man, incapable of any deep emotional relationship, even with women. In them he perceived " that soft kindness which he believed himself doomed to be forever victim of and which he hated worse than he did the hard and ruthless justice of men" (168-69).

The guilt that Christmas has been taught to associate with sex pervades his first sexual encounter and other relationships with women, all of which end in violence. Christmas is the only one who doesn't know that Bobbie Allen is really a prostitute, not his girlfriend. This doomed relationship brings about disaster not only for Christmas but also for McEachern. When he confronts Christmas at a late night dance, he characteristically damns the son for consorting with a whore and rushes headlong to his own death with "the furious and dreamlike exaltation of a martyr" (205). The irony is that McEachern's puritanical teachings had led

Christmas to strike out at his father in the first place. Through the character of Christmas, Faulkner reveals that the only way to escape the lessons of the Old South is to perish like the Old South itself.

The lives and deaths of Colonel Thomas Sutpen and his children provide an excellent example of this. Sutpen's values and their effects on his children in *Absalom, Absalom!* present Faulkner's most explicit use of the father-son relationship as a metaphor for the eradication of the Old South. Supten's values show the incompatibility between the values of the aristocratic Old South and the increasingly industrial New South. Sutpen attempts to solidify his position in the New South by attaining all the possessions that a Southern gentleman of the Old South is supposed to have: "I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family—incidentally of course, a wife" (Faulkner, *Absalom* 212).

Throughout the novel, Sutpen strives to complete this design and assert his status in the postwar South. By the end

of the novel, as his plantation falls down around him, Sutpen resembles Mr. Compson. In perhaps no other novel does Faulkner make so explicit the effects of the Civil War on the Old South. Before the Civil War, Sutpen thrived in a "time when ladies did not walk but floated" (24). He succeeded in acquiring a respectable wife, a male heir, and "a hundred square miles of some of the best virgin bottom land in the country" (26).

Sutpen's design, like the Old South, is doomed from the start because it "reduces all human relation within it to the status of mechanical and preordained interactions" (Lensing 99). In his attempt to maintain his patriarchal and aristocratic values, Sutpen alienates and rejects his children, destroying the family that plays such a fundamental role in his design. For Faulkner, Sutpen's failure to understand the human attachments that are at the heart of the family prove fatal:

> To me, he is to be pitied, as anyone who ignores man is to be pitied, who does not

> believe that he belongs as a member of a human family, is to be pitied. Sutpen didn't believe that. He was Sutpen. He was going to take what he wanted because he was big enough and strong enough, and I think that people like that are destroyed sooner or later, because one has to belong to the human family, and to take a responsible part in the human family (Faulkner, *University* 80-81).

Sutpen offers no hope for a healthy relationship between himself and his male heirs. Their relationships are "of such a nature as to preclude the very possibility of an act of recognition. In a sense. . . the son is doomed either to be *absorbed* or to be *expelled*. . . ." (Bleikasten, *Fathers* 141-42). Henry, Sutpen's legitimate child, immediately becomes the object of tyranny. Henry's first appearance in the novel shows him being held against his will, "screaming and vomiting" (21) as he is forced to watch his father wrestle with one of the slaves. Henry becomes an instrument that Sutpen

will use to protect his vision of his family from Charles Bon. Bon, the son Supten refuses to recognize, is doomed to spend his life trying to gain Sutpen's acknowledgement.

Bon feels the impact of Sutpen's twisted sense of family even more than Henry. The dramatic influence of Sutpen's denial is made painfully clear when Bon says, "I shall penetrate [my father's regard] by something of will and intensity . . . and look not on my brother's face . . . but my father's. . . (254). Bon's need for recognition from his father leads to his seduction of his half-sister Judith, an act that he hopes will force some recognition from Sutpen. This hope is destroyed when Henry kills him. In the end, the Civil War and the rise of the New South have eradicated the world and values of Thomas Sutpen, Jason Compson, and Simon McEachern—none of whom properly educates his children for life in the modern world.

Faulkner, however, portrays one father who is able to adapt to the changing values of the New South. Despite the many similarities between *As I Lay Dying* and Faulkner's other

works, the novel presents a father who is able to leave the values of the Old South behind and adapt to the rising New South. After all, it is Anse Bundren who comes out on top at the end of the novel with his new wife and a new set of teeth—the perfect symbol for the way that Anse's values consume his family. Anse's capitalistic selfishness consumes his family and inflicts both psychological and physical harm on his children.

In a sense, his selfishness should function as a means for his children to adapt to and survive in the modern world. Anse's survival in the modern world comes at a great cost to his children, whom he continually ignores, endangers, and robs. Anse reveals his selfishness early in the novel. As his wife lies dying inside the house, he focuses on his own suffering: "I am a luckless man. I have ever been" (18). He forces his children to leave the bedside of their dying mother by making them feel they would do better to earn three dollars that the family desperately needs. The most evident symbol of Anse's selfishness is the family's journey to bury Addie, a

trip that Anse claims they must make to fulfill Addie's last wish. This supposedly unselfish act is seen most accurately by townspeople like Samson who remarks: "He set there on the wagon, hunched up, blinking, listening to us . . . and I be durn if he didn't act like he was proud of it" (114).

The last few lines of the novel reveal that Anse has merely been serving himself. In stark contrast with the other three fathers that dominate Faulkner's early work, Anse is able to abandon the Old Southern values. He completely embodies the industrial and capitalist values of the growing New South. The sad reality is that even though Anse has apparently adapted to life in the New South, his family still suffers like the Compsons, Sutpens, and McEacherns. Anse's abuse of his family is significant because it reveals Faulkner's belief that the Old South is so completely incompatible with the New South that even Anse Bundren is faced with terrible consequences.

The children in these novels are ill prepared for modern life and their fathers are unable to sustain themselves in the

New South. In the Old Southern social order, the patriarch was closely associated with the welfare of the South. Consequently, the literal death of the patriarch presents Faulkner with an appropriate metaphor for the collapse of the Old South and its values. The deaths of Sutpen, McEachern, Coldfield, and Compson reflect the way in which the Old South gave way to the postbellum era. The Sutpen children fade away as Sutpen's own life is taken as a consequence of his rejection of Milly and the infant girl she bears him. He dies violently at the hand of a former servant. Thus, the man who was once the image of the Old Southern aristocracy is displaced as surely as his society. Other Faulknerian fathers also disappear. In an attempt to hold on to the past, Compson locks himself in his office to read the classics. Coldfield cannot face the events of the Civil War and locks himself away in his attic. These fathers choose to ignore reality rather than face it.

The effects are particularly disastrous for the Compsons. The Compson children have known neither war

nor the glory days of the Old South. They have not been forced to watch their world disappear and be replaced by a new one. They have, however, endured their cynical, defeated, and ineffectual father. Mr. Compson, "modeled on Faulkner's own father" (Weinstein 106), brings about the fall of his family. Mr. Compson's status as destroyer comes from his lack of parental influence. What little effort he does make as a father proves Mr. Compson unfit for the role. He leaves his children with an inherited sense of failure. Andre Bleikasten describes the relationship between Mr. Compson and his children as "an encounter of shadows, for there is neither father to be obeyed nor father to be challenged" (*Fathers* 127).

This same description can be applied to the relationship between Coldfield and his daughter in *Absalom, Absalom!*. As her father immures himself in his his attic, the young daughter is left on her own. With the deaths of Compson and Coldfield, Faulkner manages to capture the way in which old Southern values were slowly and quietly replaced during Reconstruction. In *Light in August*, Faulkner returns

to his portrayal of the patriarch's violent death. Simon McEachern meets a fate similar to Sutpen's when he dies violently at the hands of his own son—the perfect symbol of the New Order replacing the Old.

The violent ends that await the children of these powerful patriarchs are characteristic of Faulkner's use of the family as a metaphor for the Old South. A failure in his own life, Mr. Compson manages to pass on his own nihilism to his most beloved son, Quentin. Quentin often reflects on the negative philosophy that Mr. Compson tried to make clear: "No battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools" (Faulkner, *Fury* 48). For Mr. Compson, "the past is never lost, unfortunately; it is always there, it is an obsession" (Sartre 268). The tragedy lies in the fact that Quentin takes his father's words to heart: "Father said a man is the sum of his misfortunes. One day you'd think misfortune would get tired, but then time is your misfortune Father said" (66). This

continual obsession with the words of his father imply that Quentin's psychological state has taken a turn for the worse.

Faulkner further reveals this obsession as Quentin recounts, word for word, one of their conversations:

> Man who is conceived by accident and whose every breath is a fresh cast with dice already loaded against him will not face that final main [gamble] which he knows beforehand he has assuredly to face without essaying expedients ranging all the way from violence to petty chicanery that would not deceive a child until someday in very disgust he risks everything on a single blind turn of a card (112).

As Quentin recalls his father's commentary on life, he is describing the events that are about to take place. He has accepted his father's defeatist values and sees no sense in prolonging his own life.

In *Light in August*, Joe Christmas's death also stems from the destructive values that his father passes down to

him. In his final and fatal relationship with Joanna Burden, Christmas is unable to maintain a healthy, emotional relationship because of his father's puritanical teachings. The son sets himself up as the aloof, coldhearted lover in opposition to the obsessed, feverish passion of Joanna. The result is Joanna's failed attempt at murdering Christmas in order to create the black lover she desires. Although she fails in this attempt, Christmas's demise is soon brought about in retaliation for Joanna's murder. With Christmas's death, McEachern's teachings have come full circle—his son has been killed and the family line has been severed. The antiquated morals that McEachern hoped would keep Christmas out of trouble have brought about his death.

Henry Sutpen also feels the burden of his father's values. Overcome by his father's obsolete aristocratic and chivalric code, Henry is driven to murder his half-brother Bon. Sutpen's only surviving son is then forced to flee the guilt of murdering his half-brother and spends the last years of his life secluded in one of the few buildings that remain on

Sutpen's land. Like Mr. Compson and Goodhue Coldfield, Henry is incapable of dealing with the world and is forced to seclude himself. Ironically, Sutpen's warped relationships with his two male heirs have resulted in the murder of one, the seclusion of another, and the spinsterhood of his only legitimate daughter.

Even the Bundren children of *As I Lay Dying*, whose father is the only Faulknerian father capable of assimilating into the New South, are doomed to the violence that plagues these novels. Anse is analogous to Mr. Compson in that he neglects his children, but Anse's disregard exists on such an outrageous level that it is amazing his children even survive the quest to bury their mother. The Bundren children's journey through modernity is devastating. Even Anse's postbellum selfishness will not save his children in the New South. By the end of the novel, Darl has been locked away; Cash has nearly lost his leg; and Vardaman's future appears troubled. The fate of these children underscores the damage that Old Southern values can inflict.

There is also the problem of paternal identification. As a part of the hypocritical social system that supported slavery while simultaneously giving their children a strict, Christian education, the Bundren family reflects the impact of the Southern social system on the family. Bleikasten explains that "if motherhood is a plain fact, a natural given of experience, fatherhood, as Faulkner's novels suggest time and again, is not" (*Fathers* 116). Before the novel ends, it is revealed that Jewel is not Anse's biological son and that Dewey Dell can offer the family a bastard but no legitimate heir. The ambiguity of the father-child relationship plays a large role in novels such as *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* Chabrier points out that marriages, "often based on social and financial considerations" (102), make clear "an element of opportunism that influences the sentiments between parents and children" (102).

In the only passage that Addie is allowed to speak, she makes it very clear that she married Anse not for love but because he had "a house and a good farm" (Faulkner, *AILD*

171). Faulkner portrays the exact marriage of convenience that Chabrier claims was characteristics of the hypocritical Old South. This marriage of convenience spawns frequent infidelities, such as the relationship between Addie and Whitfield, which create problems in paternal identification that lie at the core of Jewel's suffering. Jewel is unable to agonize in silence, however, as he is forced to endure Darl's continual insults: "Your mother was a horse, but who was your father, Jewel?" (212). The anger that grows out of the taunting between these competitive brothers is one of the reasons that Jewel turns on Darl at the end of the novel and proposes sending him off to the asylum at Jackson.

Joe Christmas of *Light in August* also suffers from a lack of paternal identification. The identity and race of his father is never revealed to him, leaving Christmas with a hole in his identity that he is unable to fill. In Old Southern society this presents Christmas with enormous problems because skin color determines every aspect of life. Christmas spends his entire life not knowing whether he is white or black.

Faulkner's early works are filled with men like Jewel and Christmas. Caddy Compson, Dewey Dell Bundren, and Lena Grove all bear bastard children. This can be seen as evidence that the hypocritical Southern culture contributed to the destruction of the family and the Southern bloodline.

Each novel overwhelms the reader with families that will not survive. The Compson family of *The Sound and the Fury* is at the end of its line. The reader is witness to the final decline of Compson nobility, seeing their oldest son born an idiot, their most promising son drowned by his own hand, and their daughter fallen into the hands of a Nazi. Faulkner manages to assure us that the Compson line will end; their time, like the Old South's, was destined to end.

Light in August, the last of Faulkner's great early works, further complicates the destruction of the Southern bloodline. Christmas, the primary character and son, is the physical embodiment of mixed bloodlines whose death effectively ends the family. Other characters that portray the end of traditional Southern life are Joanna Burden and

Reverend Gail Hightower. Though they exist outside of society, both Joanna and Hightower "dramatize some essential aspect of the rural South in the early decades of the twentieth century" (Bleikasten, *Fathers* 130). Joanna, an obsessive abolitionist who possesses an unhealthy fixation on the race of her lover Joe Christmas, is characteristic of the sexual and racial desires that permeated Southern culture. In addition, Hightower, whose life was "a single instant of darkness in which a horse galloped and a gun crashed" (Faulkner, *LIA* 491), is symbolic of the Southern romanticism of the past. These two characters exist as extremes on the boundaries of society, yet they serve as representations of the values that marked life in the South. Faulkner makes it very clear that these values will live and die with these characters—they will not be continuing the patriarchal bloodline. Joanna is a childless spinster when she is murdered by Christmas, and Hightower's wife has long been dead when the novel closes with him lost in "the dying thunder of hooves" (493).

It is *Light in August*'s Rosa Coldfield, however, that perhaps best illustrates Faulkner's portrayal of the dying Southern

bloodline. The imagery invoked by her family name serves as an accurate metaphor for the end of the Old Southern agrarian culture and all of its values. The fields and the fathers that existed at the center of the Southern social order have gone cold. The way of life that revolved around the field, the plantation, and the father ended with the Civil War.

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Autobiography, Patriarchy, and Motherlessness in *Frankenstein*

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The characters who populate Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* indicate the autobiographical nature of the book, particularly in its stance on the motherless daughter. In a story that reflects Shelley's own experience, daughters are always motherless, like the monster around which the action revolves. The motherless daughters in the story, much like Shelley herself, are left open to the scorn, rejection, and dehumanization which a culture raised by and for fathers heaps upon them. Thus, by his circumvention of the mother and the further undermining of the humanity of his motherless creature, Victor Frankenstein is portrayed as the patriarch who creates but cannot love and who fears sexual reproduction.

Shelley's own motherless, vulnerable life and her fear of motherhood come through in her book, where almost every character is a fictionalization of someone she knew. For example, her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, often wrote under the pseudonym of Victor, the name of her story's protagonist. Percy had a sister named Elizabeth, with whom he shared a "passionately loving attachment," while Victor Frankenstein and his cousin/sister Elizabeth have a barely un-incestuous relationship in the book (Hill-Miller 61). More importantly to my purposes, however, is that Shelley's mother, the great feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, who authored *The Rights of Women,* a bleak look at the prospects of motherhood in England's patriarchal society, died only eleven days after giving birth to her own daughter. Wollstonecraft's death created in Mary Shelley a lifelong guilt and a vision of motherhood as a fatal endeavor. Her father, the philosopher William Godwin, was also a famous author. Along with her husband he is reflected in the character of Victor Frankenstein, who creates a motherless creature but abandons it as soon as it comes to life. Similarly,

Godwin abandoned his daughter when she made an autonomous decision and eloped with Percy Shelley. During her period of estrangement from her father, Shelley gave birth to two children, both of whom died afterward. The deaths of her children furthered Shelley's interpretation of motherhood as a thing to be feared–to her mind, motherhood could not succeed either for its children or its mothers. Thus, in her 1831 introduction of the book, Shelley called it her "hideous progeny," her creation in the place of a child (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 912).

This terror of motherhood, and its implications to its unfortunate products, is shown frighteningly in *Frankenstein*, where *every* daughter is without a mother and is frequently also the cause of her mother's death. Victor's cousin Elizabeth's mother dies early on; she is adopted by the Frankenstein family and becomes a sister to Victor. She transmits scarlet fever to her adopted mother, whose death Victor calls an "irreparable evil," and from which he never seems to fully recover (927). Justine, a favorite servant of the Frankensteins, becomes a permanent part of the family when *her*

mother dies, and she becomes "like a most affectionate mother" (951)to the youngest child, Edward. Even the minor characters of the Arabian girl Safie and the young girl Agatha with whom she lives are motherless.

All these daughters without mothers become victms of abandonment by patriarchal figures and to the inevitable death that surrounds females who involve themselves with mothering. Elizabeth's father simply decides, upon remarriage, that he does not want her anymore. She finds a home with the Frankensteins, but her marriage to Victor and potential motherhood of his children prove fatal. Justine is executed for the murder of the boy to whom she was a foster mother. Safie's father uses her beauty to secure escape from prison with help from Felix and then refuses to let her marry him.

Seeing that all the other motherless characters in the book who are subject to death and patriarchal rejection are daughter and that Shelley herself was abandoned by her father, Frankenstein's creation may be read as an extension of this theme, and even as

Shelley herself. Although he is male, his character has much more in common with the story's daughters than with its fathers and sons.

To cement this reading of the monster as Shelley and a daughter, one must look again at the relationship between Victor's rejection of his creation and William Godwin's abandonment of Mary Shelley. Both Victor and Godwin delighted in their motherless creations until the moment of realization that these daughter figures were capable of autonomy. Shelley's decision to use her reproductive powers outside of wedlock reminded her father that she was not merely a creation over which he could wield power, much as the animation of Victor's creation makes him realize that the monster can and will have powers of its own.

Given this feminine reading of the creature, his experiences are illustrations of every daughter's vulnerable existence without a mother. He is chased from human society, denied a parental relationship, and generally dehumanized by the patriarchy which gave him birth. Just as Victor dotes on the motherless Elizabeth,

not as a friend or loved one but as a "favorite animal" or a "summer insect," the creature is dehumanized in all his interactions with mankind (923). The unnaturalness of the monster's creation is reflected in his frightful appearance and further capitalized upon by an unfeeling patriarchal culture, represented first by his creator Victor. At his animation, Victor recoils from him and refers to him as an "animal," just as he did Elizabeth (946).

As the creature comes to a more human understanding, he teaches himself language and compassion while watching the DeLacey family and hopes to become a part of humanity despite his maker's abandonment. He realizes that his motherless state and his father's rejection leave him vulnerable to becoming less than human: "(N)o mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses. . . .*What* was I?" (973 emphasis added.) Later the creature recalls his loneliness with no parent to soothe him, asking, "Where was [my creator]? "(H)e had abandoned me, and, in the bitterness of my heart, I cursed him" (979). This last comment seals the creature's fate. He begins a downward spiral of bowing

to the hatred of humanity, responding by becoming the very monster they want him to be. When the DeLacey family leaves him in fear, he roams the forest, howling "like a wild beast," and decides to wage "everlasting war against the [human] species" that created and then rejected him (982).

Victor Frankenstein's place in the cycle of motherlessness and its subsequent dehumanization becomes very clear in his treatment of the creature. He first creates him with the full intention of making the mother's role in creation obsolete but then, predictably, rejects him as an unnatural monster. His act of creation is dehumanizing , he replaces the mother's role in procreation with science, and then calls his creation an inhuman monster for the very unnaturalness he bestowed upon it. His actions perpetuate the system that kills its mothers and dehumanizes its daughters, thus forcing his creation into becoming the monstrosity he fears.

Victor's attitude toward natural procreation is one of fear and disgust, making creation without the act of sex appealing. His revulsion may stem from his family's tendency toward incestuous

relationships and its extremely patriarchal history–his father married the daughter of one of his closest friends after having taken her in as a daughter. When he married, he did so out of a sense of obligation to "bestow[...] upon the state sons" (921). Thus, in Victor's birth there was a hint of incest and an entirely paternal desire to create sons, void of romance or regard for the mother, who was reduced to a mere carrier. When Victor gets older, he is betrothed to Elizabeth, the first cousin who has been a sister to him throughout his childhood. On her deathbed, Victor's mother calls them both "my children" (927) and then immediately begs the 'siblings' to marry. After this first implication of incest, she goes on to ask Elizabeth to "supply [her] place"(927) to the children, thus making Elizabeth a cousin, sister, and even mother to Victor.

Given these incestuous implications and his father's unromantic marriage, Victor's distaste for sex is unsurprising. In his descriptions of Elizabeth, his "affection" is repeatedly stated, but nowhere is there a hint of passion or romantic interest. For example, Victor says that he loves his "brothers,

Elizabeth, and Clerval," (928), putting his feelings for Elizabeth in the same vein as fraternal love for his brothers and friendly (albeit borderline homosexual) love for Henry Clerval, his best friend. In fact, throughout the novel, his sentiments regarding Clerval are decidedly more romantic-sounding than his feelings for Elizabeth. He describes Clerval as "beloved" and "divinely wrought" (994) shortly after assuring his father that he loves Elizabeth "tenderly and sincerely" with "admiration and affection" (991).

Regardless of whether his real romantic interests lie in Clerval, however, Victor seems to redirect his heterosexual desire with the creation of his monster, which he describes in highly sexualized language. In the search for dead tissue, he looks in the "unhallowed damps" of the earth, and with "unrelaxed and breathless eagerness [...] pursue[s] nature to her hidden places." His construction of the creature he calls his "midnight labors," which he works at with "unremitting ardor," "a resistless, and almost frantic impulse," and "an eagerness which perpetually increase[s]" (933). When at last he arrives at "the consummation of [his] toils," the animating process is described as orgasmic, both for him and

the creature (932). "With an anxiety that almost amount[s] to agony," Victor watches the creature "breathe hard, and a convulsive motion agitateits limbs" (934). This description is almost that of masturbation; Victor, alone in his secluded tower, works himself into a sexualized frenzy to gratify his creative powers without a woman. When the creature's body convulses, Victor's horror at his actions is apparent: "I had desired it with an ardor that far exceeded moderation, but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished" (935).

Once he has created his monster, he realizes the abomination of his product. The "wretch," as he calls it upon its birth, is his creation and his alone. He has no female counterpart with whom he can jointly control it, and the autonomy of his unnatural, motherless creature frightens and dismays him. He runs from it and sleeps away his cares, only to dream a prophetic dream. In his sleep he sees "Elizabeth, in the bloom of health" and takes her into his arms to kiss her. However, at the moment of physical contact, he beholds that

he is in fact kissing "the corpse of [his] dead mother," and upon waking is confronted by the newly animated monster. His dream is a shortened version of the entire story of the book his fear of physical sexuality with his sister/mother (Elizabeth) betrays his fear of incest (shown by an intimate embrace with his mother), which in turn pushes him to create a monster without a mother–thus invalidating the role of the mother, as symbolized by the corpse in his dream.

Victor's aversion to heterosexual sex and his subsequent destruction of motherhood is again brought to light when he tears apart the female creature he was making for his original monster. He toils for months on her creation, but when he realizes that he is effectively providing the creature with a sexual partner with whom he could produce a "race of devils," destroys her (1000).

This scene is important to all the themes being discussed here. Of course, Victor's fear of sex is again stated, but his actions are also paradoxical in regards to his attitude toward patriarchy and motherhood. While he destroys the female creature to keep her from becoming a mother and thus perpetuating the cycle of

motherlessness, he is also strangely putting an end to that very cycle. Were he to imbue her with life, she would be another motherless creature, spurned by society if she chose mankind over her mate. Rather than adding another wretch to the ranks of dehumanized motherless daughters, he chooses not to give her life at all.

This reading may seem a bit of a stretch, but take into consideration that it is only after Victor destroys the female creature, ending the cycle of motherlessness, that he begins to show any real romantic interest in Elizabeth. In his newfound passion for a heterosexual relationship, he seems to be further distancing himself from the motherless cycle he had once championed. When the monster vows that he "will be there on [Victor's] wedding-night" (again replacing the sex act with his presence), Victor misinterprets his words to mean that he will be murdered, and his only compunction over this idea is that he would leave his "beloved Elizabeth" bereaved (1001). Here is the first incidence of the word "beloved" in signifying Elizabeth instead of

Clerval. After Clerval's death (which might have added some fuel to Victor's passion, with his homosexual love gone–but that is for another essay), Victor finally begins to "love Elizabeth, and look forward" to his union with her (1014). His fear of sex and incest appears to be gone, and his desire to prevent motherhood abandoned.

For all his reforms, Victor is doomed to live out his original dream of a motherless creation story. When the fated night arrives, the monster kills Elizabeth instead of Victor, and by doing so closes the cycle of motherlessness that his birth started. By killing the woman who might have someday borne Victor's natural children, his unnatural, motherless child truly becomes both the monster his father abhorred and the product of a patriarchy that Victor continued. Elizabeth was Victor's only hope of breaking the cycle he had perpetuated, and in her death the smaller cycle of motherlessness, dehumanization, and ultimate patriarchal power that he began with his monster's construction is complete. The monster's murder of Elizabeth perpetuates the trend of daughters

killing their mothers in that Elizabeth could have been his mother if he had been a natural born child.

Thus Shelley brings the reader to her point. Her life lived as a motherless child of a patriarch and her experience as a failed mother left her open to all sorts of fears about motherhood. She felt that she was a spurned creation of a society in which mothers cannot survive due to the repression of their natural reproductive powers and where daughters have no control over their own humanity once they have caused their mothers' deaths. *Frankenstein* is a truly despairing novel about the nature of a society that lets its daughters become monsters rather than esteemed citizens and serves as a warning to those who would try to keep mothers out of creation. Mary Shelley's experience, told through the "dull yellow eye" of the creature, left her with little hope for her future as a mother or for her children's lives after her death.

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To William Godwin

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In 1987, Professor Betty T. Bennett discovered twelve letters written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley to her cousin Elizabeth Berry in the manuscript archives of the Mitchell State Library in Sydney, Australia (Mitgang 29). These letters reveal that Mary Shelley did not share the radical political views of her father, William Godwin. So why did she dedicate her novel, *Frankenstein* (1818), to her father – author of *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* – if she was opposed to the political ideologies expressed in his works? Beginning with her dedication, Mary Shelley used *Frankenstein* to covertly express her own political views and to warn Godwin and his poetic disciples that their revolutionary writings could

have dire consequences for their readers and for themselves. Their ambitious stance in challenging the religious, political, and social conventions of the day later cursed these writers with guilt and regret as the horrors of the period's many uprisings became more widely known. Victor Frankenstein's tale was being told to William Godwin and the Romantic poets who were following in his footsteps in the hope that they would see in Victor many of their own traits and learn from his mistakes.

The Romantic period was a time of accelerating change. It began with the revolutions in America and France and ended with the reform of England's Parliament (Damrosch 3). Amidst the social turmoil, William Godwin resigned from the ministry in 1782 and became an atheist. He switched his focus from religion to politics and became "a spokesperson for political radicalism" (Smith 7). Professor Kelvin Everest explains that the Romantic revolt was "a revolt in a more thorough going sense, against the very existence of dominating shared standards and conventions" (2). Laura K. Egendorf adds that the Romantics used their writing to, "break loose from the chains of modern society and explore

the idealized worlds that they created in their mind" (15). Thus, they gave voices to masses of people in the lower and middle classes who resented the unjust social, political, and economic privileges associated with the traditional monarchy and class structure. In his Marxist reading of *Frankenstein*, Warren Montag describes the mobs of people mobilized to fight for the French Revolution as "a monster that, once unleashed could not be controlled" (386). This "monster" was the masses that fought and died for the Romantics' "idealized worlds" during the period's many violent uprisings that began with the French Revolution and culminated with England's "Great Reform Bill" of 1832 (Everest 2).

In their reaching for political and social change, the poets and writers of the period had indeed created a monster. The mobs were fed on the Romantics' works as propaganda; these masses dreamed of liberty and equal rights for all, but instead of a glorious revolution, France found itself in a period of chaos and tyranny. Mary Shelley distanced herself from the radical views of her father's literary circle because she was not as interested in

"revolution and creating new worlds" as she was in improving the existing social structure (Egendorf 20).

Mary Shelley used both Victor Frankenstein and Robert Walton to warn her readers about the dangers of ambition. She designed *Frankenstein* so that Victor is the novel's primary narrator and Walton, who listens to his story, takes the place of the reader. Like Walton, the reader is meant to learn something from this cautionary tale. The readers of 1818 that could learn the most from Victor's tale were the second wave of Romantic poets, particularly Mary's husband, the renowned poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. In one of his first letters to his sister, Walton describes how passionate Victor is in relaying his story: "I [Walton] paused; – at length he [Victor] spoke, in broken accents: – 'Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drank also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me, – let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!'" (38). Similarly, Frances Winwar describes Godwin as being, "intoxicated with his dream of perfection: The time would come, hailed Godwin,...when there should be no ignorance, no inequality, no distinctions of sex,

no death!" (4). Godwin and Victor are both intoxicated by their quest to improve humanity through new theologies. They also share the same dream to rid the world of death although Godwin means preventable deaths from the hands of tyranny and oppression while Victor plans literally to rid the world of death by using the scientific secret he has discovered. The similarities between these two revolutionaries are remarkable. Biographer Emily Sunstein comments on this resemblance:

> [Progressives] considered Godwin an immortal martyred leader of the great cause that would rise again. Granting his lack of common sense in *Political Justice*, they compared him to a great, if failed, explorer on humanity's behalf – *a Promethean paradigm that Mary would immortalize in her scientist, Frankenstein* [emphasis added], whose confidant, Walton, is a polar explorer. (20)

Walton seems destined to follow in Victor's footsteps, just as Percy and the second wave of Romantic writers seem destined to

follow in Godwin's footsteps. Ironically, early reviews of the book place its themes among the works of the very radicals Mary Shelley was trying to warn.

When *Frankenstein* was published in 1818, the novel was presumed to be a contribution to the debate on national religion that William Godwin and his followers had provoked in the 1790's. Because Mary Shelley originally published *Frankenstein* anonymously, many people suspected that her husband was the novel's architect. Sir Walter Scott wrote an enthusiastic early review of the novel in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (March 1818) that "established *Frankenstein*'s 'stature' and novelty on 'supernatural' fiction, and the author's 'original genius.' Scott, like most people, assumed that [Percy] Shelley had written *Frankenstein*" (Sunstein 156). The novel's dedication to Godwin led many early critics to detect immorality and impiety in its pages. An anonymous author from *Edinburgh Magazine* confidently states:

> It [*Frankenstein*] is formed on the Godwinian manner, and has all the faults, but many likewise

> of the beauties of that model. In dark and gloomy views of nature and of man, bordering too closely on impiety, – in the most outrageous improbability, – in sacrificing everything to effect, – it even goes beyond its great prototype. . . . (249)

Radicalism, impiety, immorality, and the "Godwinian manner" were all associated with the novel in its early reviews.

The mystery of the author's identity did not endure for very long. To correct the misconception that Percy was the author, Mary wrote a brief note to Scott taking responsibility for the novel. Bennett highlights the wittiness of this young author: "Mary wrote a letter thanking him for his kindness about *her* book" (Mitgang 29). Word traveled fast that the author of *Frankenstein* was not only a young woman but the daughter of radical feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin (Smith 4; Sunstein 156). Critics and contemporary readers were lost in the intricacies of Mary's design. Searching for her father's and husband's radical ideals in the novel, they failed to see one of its fundamental themes. *Frankenstein* is Mary Shelley's own Romantic revolt against her

father's political views. Godwin and the Romantic poets were too blinded by their own egos to see that Mary was subtly criticizing their radical ideals and literary works.

Terence Allan Hoagwood lists two characteristics of Romanticism that explain why Mary Shelley may have used *Frankenstein* to covertly express her political views:

> First, figural or symbolic substitutions are induced in the discourses of art when politically contentious material is dangerous under political repression. Second... Romantic works often turn to reflexive thought and writing about symbolic substitution and correlative acts of interpretation. (3)

When Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, women had not yet gained the right to vote; therefore, it was a risky endeavor for a woman to write about politics. Knowing how her mother's reputation had been dragged through the mud, Mary was particularly cautious when she entered the public sphere. Her caution was very likely augmented by the fact that she was criticizing two men whom she loved and with whom she shared

much of her life--her husband and her father, both of whom had well-established public identities.

Iain Crawford supports this idea of a hidden agenda in *Frankenstein*:

> That Mary should have voiced her qualifications in this covert manner need hardly be surprising, since there is little cause to assume that she articulated them fully even to herself and every reason for understanding why they should have remained disguised in print.(259)

Her conservative message was cleverly "disguised in print," but for Crawford to say that she did not "fully articulate them even to herself" (259) deprives Shelley of the credit she deserves for writing this meticulously crafted novel. She deliberately chose to express her opinions clandestinely. Much of what is known today about Mary Shelley's political views comes from her once private letters and journals.

Sylvia Bowerbank uses Mary Shelley's journal to support the belief that Mary has a "spirit of conservatism," despite the radicalism that dominated her father's literary circle (418). In a journal entry from 1835, Mary reflects on the radical philosophies that defined the Romantic period:

> With regard to "the good cause" – the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge, of the rights of women, &c. – I am not a person of opinions [. . .] Some have a passion for reforming the world; others do not cling to particular opinions. That my parents and [Percy] Shelley were of the former class makes me respect it [. . .] I have argumentative powers; I see things pretty clearly, but cannot demonstrate them. Besides, I feel the counter-arguments too strongly. I do not feel that I could say aught to support the cause efficiently. (Bowerbank 418-419)

Although she would probably deny it, this entry shows Mary's opinion about "the good cause" and reveals her critical perspective on the period's political writers. The quotation marks around "the good cause" suggest that Mary finds the terminology at least partially suspect and seems to question whether the cause was actually good. She also states that she feels "the counter-arguments too strongly," which indicates that she has in fact taken a stance against the radical politics of her father's circle. This letter makes it clear that she was much more conservative about politics than her parents and husband. Mary did not want to change the world as drastically as they did because she was more concerned about the loss of innocent lives and the destruction caused by society's revolutions.

The most convincing evidence of Mary's opposing political views comes from the series of letters recently discovered in Australia. In one letter to her cousin's husband, Alexander Berry, Mary comments on the political situation in England and Europe in the year 1848:

> Our public men perpetually make the grossest mistakes, & all they do, had better be left undone [. . .] Our colonies are just now of the mightiest import, while strange & (mighty) fearful events are in progress in Europe. Barbarism – countless uncivilized men, long concealed under the varnish of our social system, are breaking out with the force of a volcano and threatening order – law & peace. [. . .] In France how unscrupulous was the flattery that turned the heads of the working classes & produced the horrible revolt just put down. (*Letters* 363)

Since the letter was written in 1848, she is not talking about the public men of the Romantic period. The men she is describing, however, are the same public men that her father and husband represented forty years earlier. She also makes a connection between the architects of the revolt and the mobs of people mobilized to fight for their cause: "Barbarism – countless uncivilized

men, long concealed under the vamish of our social system," (363) refers to the men responsible for the revolt, and "the flattery that turned the heads of the working class" (363) describes the works of those men that enlisted the working class to fight for the cause. Interestingly, Mary describes those responsible for creating the revolt as "countless uncivilized men" (363) while the mobs of people mobilized to fight are referred to as "the working classes" (363). The relationship of politicians to the lower classes parallels Victor's relationship to his creation and raises the question – examined in countless critical essays – of whether the creature or Victor represents the true "monster." Mary's letter illustrates her concern about contemporary political issues, as well as her belief in progressive reform rather than violent revolutions.

The most significant clue to the hidden agenda in *Frankenstein* comes from Victor's "confidant," Robert Walton. Walton's first letter to his sister Margaret Saville reveals that he once aspired to be a Romantic poet:

> These visions [the dream of embarking on a polar voyage] faded when I perused, for the first time,

> those poets whose effusions entranced my soul, and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet, and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation . . . . (*Frankenstein* 29)

Walton's dream of becoming a Romantic poet draws a direct link between the Romantic poets that Mary is criticizing and the novel's overreaching characters, Walton and Victor. The connection between Shelley's fictional characters and the famous poets of her time shows that the ambition driving eager explorers and mad scientists also drives Romantic poets.

The university where Victor studies offers another link between Mary Shelley's fictional characters and the political activists of the period. At Ingolstadt University, Victor meets M. Waldman, his professor who depicts modern scientists as gods:

> These philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles . . . . They ascend into the heavens: they

> have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe.
>
> (*Frankenstein* 53)

Before the advent of modern science, scientists were referred to as natural philosophers. In the years surrounding the release of *Frankenstein*, there were great leaps made in the fields of science and politics. The universal name "philosophers" used to describe these professions blurs the boundaries between political philosophers like William Godwin and the period's scientists. Emily Sunstein draws another significant parallel between Ingolstadt University and the period's political activists, pointing out that "Ingolstadt University [was] the cradle of the radical Illuminati sect" (123). This University was the headquarters of "political visionary" Adam Weishaupt, founder of the Illuminati. Weishaupt later became a conservative, disillusioned by the violence of the French Revolution (Sunstein 50; 427).

Marking the time-span in which the events of *Frankenstein* unfold is difficult. Walton's letters to his sister are

dated, but the decade and year are omitted. Warren Montag, however, points to a passage that places the novel in the midst of the French Revolution. During their journey to Scotland, Victor and his friend Henry Clerval stop briefly in Oxford, England:

> As we entered this city, our minds were filled with the remembrance of the events that had been transacted there *more than a century and a half before* [emphasis added]. It was there that Charles I. had collected his forces. This city had remained faithful to him, after the whole nation had forsaken his cause to join the standard of parliament and liberty. The memory of that unfortunate king, and his companions . . . gave a peculiar interest to every part of the city, which they might be supposed to have inhabited. The spirit of elder days found a dwelling here, and we delighted to trace its footsteps. (*Frankenstein* 140)

Montag remarks, "Frankenstein's meditation on the Revolution of 1642 in England locates the narrative in the

1790s, placing it in the midst of the French Revolution" (385).

This is not surprising considering that the French Revolution was the major event of the period and that *Frankenstein* was published just two years after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 (384). What is remarkable about this allusion is that "its tone is unexpectedly sympathetic to Charles I, a monarch typically regarded by the Whigs (moderates of the day), let alone the radicals of Shelley's circle, as the very figure of a tyrant" (385). This passage illustrates exactly how Mary Shelley uses *Frankenstein* to discreetly express her conservative political views.

The allusion to England's civil war is significant because it reveals that Mary Shelley is sympathetic not specifically to Charles I but to "the spirit of elder days" that the king represented. After Charles I was beheaded by order of Parliament in 1649, England fell into a dark period of chaos and tyranny. The new Parliament was unable to accomplish anything, and dissolved of its own accord. Oliver Cromwell claimed to be an opponent of absolutism but governed more absolutely than Charles I. Few leaders have

inspired more fear and hatred. Eleven years after the beheading of his father, Charles II was welcomed back to England where he restored the throne and traditional political system (Southgate 918). Like the people of England, Victor longs for the past. Victor now sees that nature's cruelty in death and childbirth is not as horrific as his own creation. The results of both Victor's experiment and Parliament's experiment turned out to be worse than the problem itself.

Warren Montag maintains that the English and French revolutions were "the most developed and elaborate social and political 'experiments' in modern history and both had 'failed' . . . ." (385). By using the French Revolution as a backdrop for *Frankenstein*, Shelley draws a parallel between the English Civil War and the French Revolution. This reinforces one of the central themes of the novel. Montag explains:

> Even the most cursory examination of this singular period reveals that its key themes are precisely those of *Frankenstein*: there is everywhere a sense of monstrous forces unwittingly conjured

> up in order to serve the project of progress and the Enlightenment but have ultimately served to call that very project into question. (384)

After the collapse of the French monarchy, chaos ensued. Conservatives and even those who looked to the revolution with optimism began to question its resolve. The Romantic poets who supported the revolution were at least partially to blame.

In 1793, Godwin released *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, which biographer Emily Sunstein defines as a "weighty anarcho-utilitarian treatise" (16). Godwin's proposal included the arguments for the abolition of all traditional institutions of political authority. Everest explains the radical nature of Godwin's *Political Justice*:

> *Political Justice* offered a somewhat self-consciously abstract outline of 'politicalanarchy,' which objected to all constraints whatsoever on the operation of pure reason (constraints such as governments, family, emotions). In a famous example Godwin

> insisted that, confronted with a situation where it was possible to save from death by fire either a respected philosopher, or one's own wife or mother, reason would dictate that the philosopher be saved, because that course of action would yield the most benefit to people in general. (19)

Frances Winwar explains the impact that the book had: "His *Political Justice* came out at a price that only members of a perfected society could have afforded. Men on the seat of power read the prophecies of the dreamer and, shaken, clamored for the suppression of such dangerous heresies" (4). William Pitt, Britain's prime minister from 1783 to 1806 (Mullett 454), remarked, "A three guinea book could never do much harm among those who had not three shillings to spare. He [Pitt] was mistaken" (Winwar 4). The book's theologies quickly spread among the lower and middle classes. Sunstein adds that at the time of its release, "perhaps no work of equal bulk ever had such a number of readers" (16). The book ignited a new form of political activism led by the first wave of Romantic writers.

Godwin's work was the most influential book of the 1790s among the radical-intellectual community which included William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Blake. Coleridge and Robert Southey, author of *Joan of Arc*, even planned a "Godwinian" colony in western Pennsylvania (Sunstein 16). The utopian democratic community in America was to be named "Pantisocracy, or equal rule by all" (Damrosch 520). Winwar explains their dream as follows: "Inspired by their own innocent living, they, too [like Godwin], would produce imperishable works . . . , they would found a robust and glorious race – of the perfect man!" (5).

The ideology behind this Godwinian colony is strikingly similar to Victor Frankenstein's plan to improve humanity using modern science. As Victor completes work on his creature, he feverishly reveals the passions that drove him: "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me" (58). Unfortunately for Victor he "succeeded" in his scientific endeavor, but like many of the Romantics' dreams, his vision produced terrible results.

As the violent excess of the Reign of Terror became more widely known, support for the revolution faded and a spirit of conservatism spread throughout England. Many blamed the extremist poets who had publicly supported revolution for inciting the violence. One of the period's most renowned critics, William Hazlitt, blasts the liberal writers in his article "Lectures on the English Poets" which appeared in the weekly newspaper *The Examiner*:

> Mr. Wordsworth is at the head of . . . the Lake school of poetry. . . . This school of poetry had its origins in the French Revolution, or rather in those sentiments and opinions which produced that revolution . . . . Our poetical literature wanted something to stir it up, and found that something in the principles and events of the French Revolution. (Everest 78)

Attacks on the liberal poets became commonplace in the press. In a scene suggestive of the many film adaptations of *Frankenstein*, a mob spurred on by the growing hostility towards the "damned

Jacobins" surrounded Wordsworth's house protesting against his radical views. The angry mob ultimately drove Wordsworth and his sister out of their home in Nether Stowey (58).

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was born in 1797 during the climax of the turbulent events that shaped the Romantic period. Critic Robert M. Ryan cites the importance of recent analyses of Mary Shelley's writing in defining the period:

> Mary Shelley merits attention in any study of the British Romantic period, not only because of her close personal relationship with many of the poets and political philosophers who exemplified what her husband called 'the spirit of the age' but also because she developed her own original critical perspective on the values represented by that spirit, a perspective that has earned increasing attention in more recent revaluations of British Romanticism. (179)

Keeping with the "spirit of the age," Mary uses Victor Frankenstein as a "symbolic substitution" for the Romantic

poets and their ideological leader. Victor is a composite of the writers of the Romantic period who tried to re-shape the traditional political and class structure with their works. Shelley analyzes the ethical nature of the writers and suggests that they, like Victor, should take moral responsibility for their creations. The relationship between Victor and the creature can be viewed as a metaphor for the relationship between the artist and his work. Mary Shelley supports this metaphor in the 1831 introduction to her novel. While thinking of "her ghost story"(24), Mary envisions, for the first time, Victor's response to his creation: "His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handwork, horror-stricken" (24). Many writers who supported the French Revolution were also "horror-stricken" when they heard reports of the bloodshed and disorder during the infamous Reign of Terror.

Victor Frankenstein and the Romantic poets share a common curse: guilt, regret, and an infinite longing for the way things were before their "works" were released. Victor's regret and longing for the past begins the morning after he completes his "monster." This is also when he begins to quote Romantic poets.

Walking the streets in a daze on that dreary morning, Victor recites a passage from Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:

> Like one who, on a lonely road,
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And turns no more his head;
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread. (62)

The first part of the Ancient Mariner's penance is complete because he has seen the error of his ways and now loves all of God's creatures. Victor has also seen the error of his ways. From that morning on, Victor no longer has any desire to pursue his scientific endeavors. Although he agrees to make the creature a bride, his conscience does not allow him to do it: "I had resolved in my own mind, that to create another like the fiend I had first made would be an act of the basest and most atrocious selfishness; and I banished from my mind every thought that could lead to a different conclusion" (*Frankenstein* 148). Victor's quest for omnipotence

has ended, but like the Ancient Mariner he is not yet forgiven for his sin. In the hope that others will learn from his mistakes, the Mariner must relive the events of his voyage through hell over and over as he wanders the earth telling his story. He does this because he knows "a frightful fiend" is following him, the "fiend" of guilt for killing the holy bird and the horror of God's fury. Victor too is compelled to tell his story as he scours the earth for his creation.

Peter Kitson describes the influence the French Revolution had on Coleridge's poem: "The ideas of guilt and restoration which are implicit in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' were developed by Coleridge over several years and grew out of his observation of the career of the French Revolution" (25). He adds that "Coleridge was disillusioned with the French Revolution but also convinced of the depth of his own country's guilt . . . During the composition of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' Coleridge was brooding upon his own sense of personal guilt" (27). The connection between the poet's responsibility for his work and Victor's responsibility for his creation becomes even more clear, as Mary Lowe-Evans highlights the impact of the poem on

Frankenstein: "'[The] Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is still one of the most effective treatments of the sins of an overreaching individual against the community. Mary Shelley would recall Coleridge's haunting words and use them to reinforce the same theme in *Frankenstein*" (3). Iain Crawford illustrates the connection between the texts in greater detail:

> The relationship between the two texts is perhaps more profoundly seen in their common focus upon the forces of creative obsession, the demonic capacities of the human mind, and the destructive energies released when these two clash. (255)

In Victor's case the "frightful fiend" can be interpreted literally as his creation lurking in the shadows, but what truly haunts him is his guilt for creating such a creature: "I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the consciousness of which haunted me. . . but I had indeed drawn down a curse upon my head, as mortal as that of crime" (142). Victor continues to reinforce this theme of regret throughout his narrative.

As Victor reflects on the death of Justine Moritz, for example, he remarks:

> I no longer see the world and its works as they before appeared to me. Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice, that I read in books or heard from others, as tales of ancient days, or imaginary evils; at least they were remote, and more familiar to reason than to the imagination; but now misery has come, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood. (88)

The phrase "(m)onsters thirsting for each other's blood" foreshadows a letter written by Mary in 1848 which describes dreadful events in Europe. In her meticulously constructed novel, Victor's new reality reinforces the regret and longing for the past that both he and the Romantic poets felt. If Wordsworth or Coleridge and the French Revolution are substituted for Victor and his "monster," it becomes clear that this passage describes *exactly* how the Romantic poets felt about the revolution they

had embraced. Charles Schug explains the paradox of their curse in greater detail:

> The implied author of *Frankenstein* impresses us with a sense that the formulation of values is continuous, that we can never achieve a final formulation (this is the position of the Romanticist), and so is Frankenstein himself in the same situation: he recognizes that his pursuit of the monster is both futile and compulsory. It is futile because its ultimate aim is to achieve a finality that is impossible, since what he is chasing is not really his physical creation, the monster, but some solution to the terrible and monstrous moral questions that he has previously tried to avoid but which were merely exacerbated while the monster one by one murdered the people Frankenstein loved. (615)

Mary Shelley draws further parallels between Victor and his Romantic counterparts as Victor goes on to quote more poems

by the Romantics that are all about regret and longing for the past: Percy Shelley's *Mutability* (1816):"Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow [. . .]" (qtd. in Schug 92) and William Wordsworth's *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey* (1798): "– The sounding cataract / Haunted him like a passion [. . .]" (qtd. in Schug 137). Coleridge suggested to Wordsworth that he should shape his destiny as the great poet of his age by writing an epic account of the effects of the French Revolution on their own generation. This autobiographical poem – about what Everest describes as, "the pristine elation and enthusiasm of those years with a saddened, elegiac tone, subtly endowed by the perspectives of a now older Englishmen looking back in sober disenchantment . . ." (qtd in Schug 13) – became known as "The Prelude" (qtd in Schug 12-14). Controversial literature did not end with the French Revolution, nor did it end with the first generation of Romantic writers. Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Keats continued to blaze a new trail against the religious, political, and social conventions of the day. Percy Shelley,

in particular, stood steadfast in the face of what he viewed as tyranny and oppression.

In her introduction, Mary Shelley thanks her husband for his "incitement" in forming *Frankenstein:* "I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet for his incitement, it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world" (25). If one reads her letters written around the same time as this introduction, the passage takes on new meaning. Percy Shelley's "incitement" has been assumed to mean encouragement to turn her ghost story into a larger work, the novel we as know it today. This may be true; however, Mary Shelley is also implying that Percy himself – with his radical views and determination to change the world – has incited Mary to fashion her characters and her moral theme as she did. While Percy Bysshe Shelley continued to test the political boundaries of society with his radical poems, Mary Shelley counted the cost of political upheaval.

One central theme of *Frankenstein* appears in many of Mary Shelley's letters: "seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid

ambition" (183). She may not have been able to discourage her husband and her father in their devotion to radical political philosophy, but one letter reveals that she was able to prevent her son Percy from following in their footsteps.

In a letter to Alexander Berry she writes:

> You say in your letter 'Were you a young Man of Percy's age & fortune you would devote yourself to scientific pursuits & the improvements of your estates, instead of embroiling yourself in politics.' These words have reached us at an opportune moment – When I wrote last in March, Percy was canvassing the boro of Horsham – he was then a single Man, Now he is married – he has given up politics & is about to settle in the country – on his estate. (363)

Mary's injunction to "seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition" is clearly reflected in this letter: it is the same theme that she expands in her novel *Frankenstein*. Her message was

directed to her father and his radical circle in her novel; it was later directed to her son through her letters.

Just as Walton rebelled against his father by becoming an arctic explorer and Victor rebelled against his father by pursuing nature's secrets, Mary rebelled against her father by writing *Frankenstein* as her personal response to his radical views. She voiced her conservative politics in a complex manner that has remained disguised in print for more than a century. The novel's fictional characters are composites of the overreaching writers of the Romantic period by whom Mary was surrounded as a young child. She analyzes the ethical nature of these writers and implies that they, like Victor, should take moral responsibility for their creations. With the recent discovery of the letters and the subsequent critical revaluations of her works, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley has finally emerged from the shadow of the great Romantic writers and taken her rightful place among them.

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150-200 word abstract.

Three copies of each manuscript and a computer disk containing the finished version of the submission in Microsoft Word (IBM compatible).

Typeface: Times New Roman 12 pt.

All copy should be provided in current MLA format, justified left only.

Two title pages:

one to contain title of work only

one to contain author's name; address (both local and permanent); phone number & email address; name and address of college or university; name and department of endorsing professor.

Professor's note that the work is original for undergraduate course and free of plagiarism

Length: 5-20 pages.

Materials will not be returned. SASE for results.

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